WOMEN at WORSHIP

A devotional handbook

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NEW YORK 25, N. Y.

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First Things First

Meditation for a Spiritual Life Chairman

IT MAY SEEM STARTLING TO SAY that the work of a Spiritual Life Chairman is to *be* rather than to *do*. However, it is not by what we say, nor by what we do, but by what we are that we can draw others into the life of prayer, and that is our central task, to which the duties so clearly set forth in our handbook all contribute. A few hours' work a month will enable us to perform those duties with dignity and efficiency, but it is only when we offer our whole lives to God that we can become the kind of people through whom He can teach and help others.

WE MUST REALIZE AT THE OUTSET THAT ALL PRAYER IS CAUSED BY GOD; it is His idea, not ours; it is our response to His dear love. God and God alone can awaken in us a desire for communion with Him, and until He does we are not very much affected by what other people tell us about prayer. No matter how devoted and eager and faithful we are we cannot cause others to pray, and all our attempts to do so will be fruitless and futile. But, although only God can teach us to pray, He very often uses people as His instruments in this teaching; so the question for each of us to ask herself is: How can I become the kind of person God can use to draw others into the life of prayer? And the answer is given in some words of our blessed Lord's 'which gather up the whole meaning of what it is to be a Christian': *Abide in me and I in you.* Let us stop now and read this whole passage, beginning 'I am the true vine,' from St. John's Gospel (15:1-10).

1. I AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.
2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.
3. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.
4. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.
5. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

9. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

THE MEANS TO THIS MUTUAL INDWELLING which alone can make us fruitful branches are threefold: prayer, the reading of Holy Scripture, Holy Communion. We are to make a definite time, faithfully, every single day, to be alone with God, to fill our minds with the thought of His love and tenderness, to open our hearts to Him in prayer. We are to read our Bibles every single day, slowly, prayerfully, humbly, ever seeking to learn what God would teach us in every word we read. And we are to go regularly and faithfully to the Holy Communion. 'There is no other way that we can receive God into our very beings as we can receive him in the bread and wine of Holy Communion.' There, as nowhere else, are we 'made one body with him, that he may dwell in us and we in him.'

IF WE FEEL INADEQUATE, THAT IS A GOOD SIGN, for it is when we feel helpless that we turn to God. We have only to read the Bible to see that God can and does turn very commonplace, uneducated men and women into great saints. If we will give ourselves to Him each day in loving obedience, He will take our offered lives and use them for His Holy purposes. He will give us all the love and wisdom and strength we need.

The Task of the Spiritual Life Chairman - -

is to help others to work for the extension of God's Kingdom in their own hearts

THE INWARD AND SPIRITUAL WORK is offering ourselves to God to be used as His instruments for helping others. Three means to this self-offering are:

1. *A Rule of Life* — This means setting aside a not-to-be-interfered-with time each day for prayer, Bible study, devotional reading; and faithful and frequent Holy Communion (even when it is necessary to rise early or drive to another town).

2. *Intercession* — Our most important work is done upon our knees. We are to offer our love and strength to God *daily* to be used for the blessing of:

   a. Our bishop and clergy.

   b. The officers and work of the Woman's Auxiliary, especially the Spiritual Life Chairmen and their work.

   c. The women in our own chapter. (Using a list of names, we are to pray for a few each day, asking that God's holy will may be done in and through each one. Let us pray especially for those who do not come to church very often, those who are sick or troubled, those who are difficult or tiresome.)

3. *Asking others to pray for us* (especially our parish clergy).

THE OUTWARD AND VISIBLE WORK by means of which we can help others is to:

1. *Plan and lead devotions at meetings* (or arrange for someone else to do so). Follow the Church calendar (no Christmas carols during Advent!). Include the collect for the day or week, prayers for our bishop, clergy and prayer partner, and prayers appropriate to the subject of the program.

2. *Start Prayer Groups.*

3. *Plan devotional study courses.*

4. *Create an atmosphere in which it is natural to speak of prayer.* Remind the women of the chapter to remember the Auxiliary and each other in their prayers and to pray for the bishop and clergy, especially their own rector.

5. *Distribute devotional literature* by helping to start a parish library, by stocking a tract rack, by selling and giving away pamphlets. (The small capital needed can probably be borrowed from the chapter treasury or the rector's discretionary fund.)

6. *Visit the sick and shut-ins* to tell them that they are being prayed for and to ask them to pray for the concerns of the parish and Auxiliary. Take them prayer cards and devotional pamphlets.

7. *Help to plan corporate communions,* with your rector and your UTO and Prayer Partner chairmen. See that everyone is notified and urged to attend.

8. *Plan Quiet Days and Quiet Hours* and days of prayer with people taking turns at a prayer desk in the church.

9. *Help others to grow in the Christian life by living the Christian year.* Stress the purpose and meaning of the feasts and fasts and seasons of the Church calendar. Announce Holy Day and Saints' Day services and encourage attendance. Remind members to pray for the clergy and for seminarians on Ember Days, and to observe the Prayer Book fast days with acts of self-denial and give the money saved to *The Feed and Hungry Fund* to be sent to *The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief.*

Devotions At Meetings

IN ALL OUR PRAYER WE SEEK FIRST OF ALL TO BE STILL in God's loving and holy Presence; we go to church a few minutes early so that we may prepare in silence to meet Him whom our souls desire to love. Whether we pray kneeling beside our beds or in a glorious cathedral, or standing in the parish house, we are to begin by thinking of God's wonderful, tender love for us, and then of His blazing holiness. So, let us at all our meetings fence off our prayer from our chatter by a few moments of silence when we can think together humbly and quietly of God's love and holiness. This little pause could be preceded by a line from a psalm or by one of the opening sentences from Morning or Evening Prayer.

BECAUSE THE CHURCH INHERITS A TRADITION of thousands of years of praying, anyone who plans devotions is confronted by such a marvelously rich and varied store of material that choice is very difficult indeed. It is a little bit like having to make up one's mind about what to choose from a long and tempting and delectable looking restaurant menu.

PRAYER FOR THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR FIRST ACT in planning devotions. Then we consider: 1. The Church calendar, the day or season of the Christian year; 2. The needs of the group who are to take part in the devotions; 3. The subject or purpose of the meeting; 4. The time allowed. We might say that at every meeting the devotions should include the Our Father, the collect for the day (we are part of the praying Church), the Woman's Auxiliary prayer, a prayer for God's blessing on our work, and prayers for our bishop, our rector, our Auxiliary officers, and our Prayer Partner. It is not necessary to have a separate prayer for each, though that is nice. We could use something like this: 'Heavenly Father, we pray thee for our bishop, our rector, the officers of the Woman's Auxiliary and our Prayer Partner. Forasmuch as without thee, they are not able to please thee, mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule their hearts. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.' If our devotions seem perfunctory, let us try using litanies so that everyone can take part. It is wonderful

(except during Lent and Advent) to use the Te Deum and the Gloria in Excelsis occasionally. We are always asking God for something! Let us sometimes just thank Him and praise Him and love and adore Him.

SOME SUGGESTIONS AND REMINDERS — Many 'amateur' leaders go too fast. There is no hurry! Let us read every beautiful word clearly, remembering the perfection of Him whom we worship. It is best not to use too much 'expression.' We are trying to draw the thoughts of the group to God, not to ourselves. Remember that the salutation, 'The Lord be with you,' (evoking the response, 'And with thy spirit.') may correctly be used only by a priest; and only a priest can pronounce a blessing in God's name. Laymen must say 'bless *us*,' never 'bless *you*.' And here is a new closing blessing. 'The Lord bless us with His presence; keep us in His way; make His face to shine with love upon us; be gracious unto every trusting soul; guide us with His eye and grant us His peace. Amen.'

(Every Spiritual Life Chairman should have a copy of *With All Our Hearts* by Christine Fleming Heffner, published by The Woman's Auxiliary, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, price 50¢, which contains eleven short services for use at meetings.)

Quiet Days

QUIET DAYS — It is from our blessed Lord Himself that we learn the value of quiet communion with our heavenly Father, for the gospels tell us of twenty occasions when He went off by Himself for a time of prayer and meditation. Too many of us live in a state of seething activity, accompanied by the importunate ringing of telephones, the noise of radio and TV, and a constant babble of sociable chatter. How can we hear God's voice if we are never still, — quiet only when we are asleep? All of us need to get away from our duties and distractions and draw near to God. The emphasis, however, is not on the getting away, but on the drawing near. A Quiet Day is not intended to be a private devotional binge, but a time when we can listen to the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit of God which dwells in the deeps of our souls. We go apart, as Jesus did, in order that we may learn God's will for us and return, fortified by His strength and wisdom, to do His will in the world.

HOW TO GIVE A QUIET DAY — If possible choose a church in a quiet place, away from the noise of traffic. The day should begin with a celebration of the Holy Communion.

(The Litany, Morning Prayer or other devotions may be used if there is no priest available to celebrate.) It is courteous to provide coffee or fruit juice for the benefit of those who receive the Holy Communion fasting. This can often be served outdoors or in the vestibule of the church. If the host parish is serving lunch, those who prepare and serve it should be asked please not to talk. If people bring their own lunches, there is less confusion if each person eats his own instead of pooling the lunches and having a cafeteria. A devotional book should be read aloud during lunch, and a supply of devotional books placed in the back of the church for the use of those who wish to read between meditations. It is best to arrange the schedule so that at least two-thirds of the time is spent in silence: for example, a fifteen-minute meditation (including prayers) followed by a half hour of silence, or a twenty-minute meditation followed by forty minutes of silence. The conductor should sit in a chair in the aisle of the church, facing the congregation. He should speak slowly and quietly.

The object of the meditations is to lead us into loving communion with God. They should be simple, quiet, and *not* stimulating. (Evelyn Underhill's 'Meditations and Prayers' and 'The Fruits of the Spirit" contain excellent meditations to use at Quiet Days.)

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF A QUIET DAY — *Arrive in time* to calm down and prepare yourself for Holy Communion. *Relax*. Be comfortable. Between meditations walk about, read, think, or write down your thoughts. Don't try to force your mind. If you feel tense, close your eyes, breathe deeply, and smile. Don't worry about doing the wrong thing. Whatever you do quietly, reverently, and with consideration for others is right. *Keep silence* in order that God may speak to you, and so that you will not interrupt God as He is speaking to others. (Usually the conductor or some other priest is available for spiritual counsel between meditations, and you may speak to him.) *Pray*. Spend much time in prayer. Ask God's guidance. Wait quietly, peacefully, happily in His presence. Hold your heart and mind open to Him so that He may speak to you as He wills. If your thoughts wander from the subject of the meditations, let God lead them where He wills.

(The suggestions in the last paragraph were taken from 'St. Martin's Cloak,' the leaflet of St. Martin's House, Bernardsville, New Jersey.)

The Woman's Auxiliary Prayer

ALMIGHTY GOD, OUR HEAVENLY FATHER — These five words with which our prayer begins remind us of three important facts, often forgotten: that God has all power to do all that He wills, even when His instruments are as frail and faulty as we are; that as children of heaven we have a high and holy heritage; that our proper relation to God is one of childlike trust and obedience. Remembering that all power is His, seeking, as children should, our Father's help and approval, we say first of all:

BLESS, WE PRAY THEE, OUR WORK FOR THE EXTENSION OF THY KINGDOM — It is evident that God will bless our work only when we do what He wants us to do. Unless we are doing His will, all our cleverness and energy and efficiency are wasted, and our work were better left undone. But how can we know His will for us? And then, how can we do it? St. Paul gives us the answer to both questions: '. . . it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' Here we are confronted with the difficult Christian paradox, so hard to get through our heads, that our work for the extension of God's kingdom must begin not in the committee room or the parish house, not in the parish, community, diocese, nation and world, but in our own hearts and lives. 'The kingdom of God is within you,' says Christ our Saviour. That is where it is to be extended first of all. It is only as He himself works in us that God can bless our work and reach others through us. One of the ways He works in us is by making us thankful, so next we pray:

AND MAKE US SO THANKFUL FOR THE PRECIOUS GIFT TO US OF THY BELOVED SON — Not just thankful for private blessings, great and small. We here pray for quite another kind of thankfulness, the deep steady thankfulness that is the wellspring of the Christian life, the joyful thankfulness that cannot be contained but must issue in acts of love — thankfulness for the Gift without which all other gifts are nothing. Perhaps only a new Christian, newly delivered from the burden of sin, the emptiness of unbelief, the fear of death as dark annihilation, can know just how precious this Gift is. How often do we, who profess and call ourselves Chris-

tians, take the Gift for granted, ignore it, — indeed, refuse it. We do well to pray to our heavenly Father to make us thankful, so thankful —

THAT WE MAY PRAY FERVENTLY, LABOR DILIGENTLY, AND GIVE LIBERALLY — Thankfulness draws us to our knees to offer all our love and spiritual strength to God to be used for His holy purposes. Thankfulness makes us work tirelessly, delighting even in drudgery done in the name of our blessed Lord, performing each task as in His holy presence. Thankfulness makes us generous, ever seeking to simplify our own needs so that we may be free to give freely of all that we have been given, time and talents and money. And as thankfulness for the Gift to us of God's beloved Son grows in our hearts it is accompanied by an ever increasing concern for those who do not know Him, a concern that allows us no peace and no rest until we are doing all that we can to make Him known to others. This missionary concern is one of the outward and visible signs by which those who have received God's precious Gift are known. When God's active love is present in our hearts, it must go out to others. In fact, 'If we are not sharing with others the gift of God, that is proof that we have not received it.' We can share the Gift, we can make our Lord known, only as we receive and know Him ourselves, and thus we are ever more lovingly drawn to seek Him in prayer and Holy Scripture, in acts of mercy, in the blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion, so that as He dwells in us and we in Him, God can use us —

TO MAKE HIM KNOWN TO ALL NATIONS AS THEIR SAVIOUR AND THEIR KING: All this we ask —

THROUGH THE SAME JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

Prayer Groups - I

Gathering in His Name

'WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER IN MY NAME, THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM.' (St. Matthew 18:20.) These words of our Lord's which have touched and inspired and guided so many Christians tell us most of what we need to know about Prayer Groups: that the *Prayer* is to be in His name; that the *Group* is just two or three of us, gathered together *with our Lord.* Let us never forget His holy Presence and that He is not only the companion, but the cause and the object of our prayer.

WHEN AND WHERE SHALL WE GATHER TOGETHER? Whatever time is chosen should be regarded as a sacred engagement (with priority over all secular engagements) which only an emergency, the needs of others, can induce us to break. Many groups meet before or after a celebration of the Holy Communion. Christians gather together to pray in all sorts of places, churches, 'caves and dens of the earth,' factories, schools, mines, homes, prisons. We are usually fortunate in being able to choose a place where we can be still in God's presence, where we can have quiet and privacy, a good light, pleasant temperature. Noise and discomfort draw our thoughts from Him. A small chapel is of course ideal. There are many advantages to meeting in some not too large corner of the church, perhaps the chancel choir stalls. If this is not practicable, a home or the parish house may be chosen. The all-important thing is to remember, wherever we are, that any place where we are gathered in His name is a holy place.

WE ARE TO PRAY IN CHRIST'S NAME — This means that it is the will of our Heavenly Father, not our own, that we are to pray for. We must beware of the superficial kind of prayer which attempts to make use of the power of God, as if it were electricity or Aladdin's magic lamp, to obtain our own desires. We pray not in order to *get,* but in order to *become.* Not in order to get what we think we want, or what we think our friends or the world need, but in order to become what God wills us (and them) to be, holy and loving, supple instruments for the doing of His will. The work of most Prayer

Groups is primarily intercession (praying for others), but Evelyn Underhill warns us that 'the natural tendency of such groups to develop into mere intercessory guilds must be carefully guarded against. Worship, adoration, an increased sense of the reality and attractiveness of God, a deepening communion with Christ, these should be their first concern.' We shall therefore be wise to include with our intercession a rich variety of prayers of adoration and self-consecration, prayers of sorrow for sin and confession, prayers of thanksgiving.

'THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM' — However small our group, however isolated our situation, we are not alone. We have the glorious assurance that our blessed Lord is present with us, and we pray as members of a larger group, His Body the Church. Our prayer, halting though it may seem, is part of the great stream of Christian prayer of all the ages. Not only are we surrounded and uplifted and sustained by the prayers of all the Communion of Saints, but 'every prayer we say, every communion, every lifting of our hearts lovingly to God, sends out through the whole body of Christ, of which we are members, an impulse of strength and joy.'

(Two useful and helpful books for Prayer Groups are *Intercession The Greatest Service* by Christine Fleming Heffner and *Prayer and Prayer Groups* by Constance Garrett, both published by The Holy Cross Press, West Park, New York. There is an extraordinarily fine passage on Prayer Groups beginning on page 246 of Evelyn Underhill's *Collected Papers,* published by Longmans.)

Prayer Groups - II

Prayer Group Procedure

WHEN WE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER to pray in the name of our blessed Lord we are to be reverent and quiet, inside and out. Any procedure that helps us to be aware of His holy and loving presence in our midst is good; anything that draws our thoughts away from Him is bad. In order to avoid awkwardness and self-consciousness it is best to have a regular procedure, see that it is understood, and follow it. Here are some ideas that have been found helpful. They are suggestions, not rules.

LET US 'KEEP SILENCE BEFORE HIM' — Our devotions should begin with a period of silence for a remembrance of God's holiness and end with a period of silence. Many groups, especially those meeting in churches, pray in silence for much of their time together. Short periods of silent prayer may follow the spoken prayers of intercession. There is great peace and power in corporate silence in the presence of God. (Two minutes may be enough to begin with — more as time goes on.)

GOD GIVES EACH ONE OF US DIFFERENT ATTRACTIONS AND DIFFERENT INSIGHTS and entrusts to each of us different people to love and pray for, and different causes. For this reason it is best to have a different person choose and lead the prayers each week. The prayer of the group is thus enriched by the 'concerns' of all the members.

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY CONFIRMS WHAT THE CHURCH HAS LONG KNOWN, that the actions of the body have a profound effect upon the soul, that a reverent posture not only expresses but increases our devotion. When possible it is best to follow our Church's custom — to stand for praise, kneel for prayer, and sit for instruction; but, if this is not practicable, let us do whatever is most sensible and helpful. When meeting in a place where kneeling is difficult or distracting, we can stand for prayer; if this is too tiring, we can sit. Each group must work out its own procedure, always remembering the reverence appropriate to God's holy presence.

A CONDUCTED MEDITATION BY ONE OF ITS MEMBERS OR READING ALOUD FROM THE BIBLE or a devotional book is an important part of many Prayer Group meetings. The reading should be done by someone (it may be the same person each time) who understands and is able to convey to others the meaning of the book, and who reads clearly and well. Reading should be followed by a period of silent meditation on what we have heard and learned. Let us remember that the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the book. The reading should be regarded as part of our prayer and not separated from it or interrupted by comment. Discussion in a prayer Group tends to make us forget God, and unless there is a wise leader often degenerates into the leading of the blind by the blind. If members of the group wish to discuss the book or study together, it is most helpful to do so informally after the prayer period is over.

A FEW ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS — Closed eyes shut out distracting thoughts. When a group grows to twelve, it should divide. Usually meetings should not last over an hour. The leader or reader should not stand up in front like a teacher, but stand, kneel, or sit among the others as inconspicuously as possible. It is her duty to time the silences so that others are not distracted by clock-watching. Although in our time of prayer together we speak only to God, there should be a time, perhap before the meeting, for reporting on those we are praying for, adding new names to our list, asking for prayers of thanksgiving, etc.

INVALIDS AND SHUT-INS who cannot be present should be asked to pray with the group and drawn into its spiritual fellowship.

Prayer Groups - III

Prayer Group Prayers

1. AN ACT OF ADORATION, said together, should follow our opening period of loving silence. For this the *Te Deum laudamus* (p. 10), *Gloria in excelsis* (p. 84), *Magnificat* (p. 26), or *Sanctus* (bottom of p. 79) are appropriate. Or, we can 'show ourselves glad in him with psalms.' Psalms should be read antiphonally, one-half of the group reading the odd-numbered verses and the 'Glory be,' and the other half reading the even-numbered verses and the 'As it was.' Psalms for every day in the Christian Year are listed in the front of the Prayer Book, beginning on page x, and Selections of Psalms, on page ix, gives them under different subject headings.

2. READING FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE comes next. For this we cannot do better than to choose the passage on the life or teaching of our Lord which the Church holds up before us each Sunday and Holy Day in the Gospels read at Holy Communion. In any case, we shall find our most fruitful readings in the gospels. A period of silence follows.

3. PRAYERS OF CONTRITION AND CONFESSION COME TO OUR LIPS when our Lord is in our midst. These may be found on pp. 6, 62, 75, 323 and 589. Remember that only a priest can 'pronounce Absolution . . . in God's Name.' As laymen we say 'forgive *us*,' or 'grant *us* absolution and remission of *our* sins.' The Penitential Psalms are 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143.

4. LET US ALWAYS PRAY, TOGETHER, THE COLLECT for the day or preceding Sunday, and during Advent or Lent, the seasonal collect. As we pray these lovely prayers we are united with all the other members of 'the blessed company of all faithful people' who have prayed them through the long Christian centuries and with those who are praying them now, on this same day, all around the world.

5. FOR THE IMPORTANT WORK OF INTERCESSION, praying for others, we can find many beautiful and suitable

prayers if we explore the Prayer Book; but, our group will be more at one, more sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, if we use bidding prayers (and occasionally litanies), with silent prayer after each clause. An example of a bidding prayer is given on page 47 of the Prayer Book. Let us end our intercessions by praying the Lord's Prayer for our parish or community.

6. WE SHALL WISH TO EXPRESS OUR CHRISTIAN THANKFULNESS (pp. 19, 50-53, 591). Some groups say the General Thanksgiving together, slowly, after the concluding silence.

7. LAST OF ALL, WE ASK GOD'S BLESSING UPON OURSELVES (pp. 592-3).

Suggestions — Keep an eye on the Church Calendar. Everybody should bring a Prayer Book so that prayers can be said *together*. The Forward Movement publishes two fine booklets of prayers, conveniently indexed, *Prayers New and Old* and *Prayers for All Occasions*. A Prayer Group does not have to be in the same place at the same time in order to pray together! Each member can list the group's concerns in her prayer notebook and include them in her private prayers. *And every member of a Prayer Group should pray for every other member*. It may not be possible to include every type of prayer suggested at every meeting, but all should be included in the course of several meetings. Try, at least sometimes, to arrive and depart in silence.

Prayer Groups - IV

Special Suggestions

OUR LORD'S PRESENCE IN OUR MIDST IS MADE VIVID FOR US when we read the Word of God *together.* While the others follow in their own Bibles or Prayer Books, one person reads the Gospel passage chosen aloud, carefully, clearly, not too fast. Then there is a period of silence (five minutes to begin with) when we look *at our Lord,* and brood lovingly over the words we have heard and let the Holy Spirit show us which scene or phrase or idea has a message for us. This is not Bible study; it is our hearts rather than our minds that are to be open. Though never a word is spoken aloud the Holy Spirit quickens the spiritual discernment of each one by bringing about in the group a sort of spiritual cross-pollenization from soul to soul. We may be quite unaware at the time of the fruits which this group reading will bring forth.

IN BIDDING PRAYERS the leader asks the group to pray for a series of concerns. ('Let us pray for God's blessing on Elizabeth who is ill,' etc.) During the period of silent prayer that follows each clause, we offer our love and strength to God to be used for the blessing of the people concerned; and we lift them up to God and place them in His holy hands, praying that His will be done in and for and by these people. When we undertake the loving labor of praying for others we soon learn that it is God, and not we ourselves, who chooses the people and causes that we are to pray for; and a Prayer Group becomes a more sensitive instrument of His will in this matter if, instead of relying on a prepared list, the leader prays spontaneously for the things that the Holy Spirit lays upon her heart. And others may desire to offer clauses of the bidding prayer or give the leader written requests, which may of course come from outside the group. Usually we are drawn to pray for the immediate concerns of our group, parish, community and Church, and for events in the day's news, rather than for large, distant, vague causes in which the group is not really, or not yet, interested. Fruitful action should issue from prayer and it is usually insincere to pray for causes for which we 'are not in fact prepared

to do one difficult thing, or to make a single sacrifice either of possessions or of prejudice.'

IT IS A SAD FACT that Prayer Groups are sometimes centers from which gossip radiates. Great care must be taken to protect those for whom we pray from gossip and curiosity. 'Almighty God, . . . from whom no secrets are hid' knows who they are and we do not have to know. It is enough, for example, to pray for 'a family that is in trouble.'

SELF-COMPOSED PRAYERS often tend to draw the group's attention away from God to the words spoken. Moreover, people who are gifted at composing prayers often become prima donnas and those who are shy are embarrassed when their turns come. It is usually wise, therefore, to limit 'spontaneous prayer' to the clauses of the biddings.

WE CAN ALWAYS BE SURE THAT WE ARE PRAYING IN THE NAME OF OUR BLESSED LORD when we use the perfect pattern prayer that He gave us, and it can be prayed for any person or any cause. Sometimes it helps us really to *pray* the Lord's Prayer if we put it into unfamiliar words. A Prayer Group might end its intercessions by using this paraphrase, praying it for the community, by adding the phrase 'here in (name of the place)' after each clause: 'Our Father in Heaven: Magnify Thy name in our lives — Reign over us with Thy sovereignty — Bend and conform our wills to Thine — Make us to receive the holy gifts Thou givest — Enter our lives with Thy creative, forgiving life, and make us to carry Thy forgiving life to others — Do Thou make us victorious in temptation, and do Thou rescue us from every enslavement of Evil. For thine . . .' (For this paraphrase and for the other ideas in this bulletin, the author wishes to express her thanks to the Reverend Charles F. Whiston.)

Feeding the Hungry

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN HUNGRY? Most of us when we say that we are hungry mean that we are looking forward to our next meal with a keen appetite; but of the loathsome diseases of malnutrition, of the pain and the fear and the despair of real hunger we know nothing. Not only have we never felt hunger but, because so many of us live out our lives completely insulated from the poor, we have never even seen it. Ask a soldier who fought in Korea what it is like to see human beings, the dear children of our heavenly Father, scrabbling around in refuse heaps seeking the food without which they will die. Not having seen hunger we do not know the surge of compassion, the sharp pang of compunction, the sickening self-disgust that the well-fed Christian must feel when he is confronted with those who are starving.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OUR LORD WOULD SAY about people who call themselves by His name and yet sit down to the table three times a day and eat all the food they want, sometimes more, and never give a thought, let alone a crust of bread, to His starving children? Those of us who are trying to follow in His footsteps might do well to meditate a little about what He said and what He did about food. Food is the first thing that He taught us to pray for. 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Not deep freezes full of beefsteaks, just daily bread. He said 'Feed my lambs,' and 'Give ye them to eat.' Let us stop here and read what he said in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, beginning at the 31st verse. And what did He do? Throughout His earthly life He was always feeding people, not only His own disciples, but all the motley multitude that followed Him. We are touched, and a little startled, at His concern over food for the young daughter of Jairus in the solemn moment when He had just raised her from the dead. Even after the Resurrection He went on feeding people. There was the savory breakfast that He had waiting on the shore for the fishing party, and the supper at Emmaus where the Holy One was known in the blessed and broken Bread. He has been feeding us ever since and He still feeds us, day after day, on all the altars of Christendom. 'Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you.'

THERE ARE TWO STERN FACTS in the Church's teaching of which we do not very much like to be reminded: The first is that gluttony, eating more than we need for nourishment, is one of the seven deadly sins, a sin against our souls and bodies, a sin against God, a sin against our hungry neighbors who, but for our greediness and wastefulness, might be fed. The second is that the Church bids us fast, to go without food. Our Lord Himself fasted and wise and loving Christians have done it ever since. The days on which Episcopalians are to fast or abstain (this usually means going without meat) are given on page li in the front of the Prayer Book:

A TABLE OF FASTS

Ash Wednesday — Good Friday

OTHER DAYS OF FASTING, ON WHICH THE CHURCH REQUIRES SUCH A MEASURE OF ABSTINENCE AS IS MORE ESPECIALLY SUITED TO EXTRAORDINARY ACTS AND EXERCISES OF DEVOTION.

I. The Forty Days of Lent.

II. The Ember Days at the Four Seasons, being the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday after the First Sunday in Lent, the Feast of Pentecost, September 14, and December 13.

III. All the Fridays in the Year, except Christmas Day, and The Epiphany, or any Friday which may intervene between these Feasts.

RESOLUTION: Every meditation should end with a resolution. What am I going to do about this? Two-thirds of the people in this world have not got enough to eat. Through our Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, we can feed in Christ's name some of the least of these His brethren whom we ourselves shall never see. If we will observe the Prayer Book days of fasting and abstinence we can all save money on food 'to give to him that needeth.' This money should be sent to: The Feed and Hungry Fund, The American Church Union, 347 Madison Avenue, New York 17, to be forwarded to the Presiding Bishop's Fund.

Some Thoughts on Sin

With Prayers for Self-Examination

WHAT IS SIN? Many of us are sincerely puzzled about it. Because we are not guilty of the obvious sins like stealing or running off with somebody else's wife or husband we do not think of ourselves as sinful; but every single one of us must face the fact that 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' (I John 1:8) Archbishop Temple tells us that 'Everything which is other than God would have it is sin. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God!" ' It is only as we grow in the knowledge and love of God, only as we come to glimpse His glory, that we begin to see how far we do fall short. Meanwhile, it will help us to seek counsel from the saints, who know God so much better than we do, and from His holy Scriptures which were 'written for our learning.' As we examine ourselves so that we may know our sins and make a good confession, let us use as our guide St. Paul's list of the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) :

LOVE — O loving Lord, forgive me all want of Love for Thee — all selfishness — all hatred and malice — all unkindness, uncharitable thoughts — all that degrades love.

JOY — Forgive me all discontent — all grumbling, despair and hopelessness — all yielding to the sense of failure — all sulleness towards others — all that has dimmed the light or dashed the brightness of any other life — all delight in what is wrong — all sullen and unready acceptance of Thy Will.

PEACE — Forgive me, O Blessed Prince of Peace, all restlessness of spirit — all the separation from Thee which sin has brought — all variance and opposition — all irritation and peevish discontent — all neglect to put myself at peace with Thee — all want of ready fellowship with others — all want of forgiveness of others.

LONGSUFFERING — O suffering and patient Jesus, grant me true repentance for all my sins of impatience — all rebellion against Thy gentle leadings — all impatience with my own slow progress — impatience with others — all words of

haste — all lack of consideration of others, especially those at home — all self-pity in suffering.

GENTLENESS — O Gentle Jesus, make me truly sorry for all my roughness of manner — harshness of speech — the spirit of contradiction — all lack of loving tenderness.

GOODNESS — Do thou, Who are perfectly good and worthy of all love, forgive in me all that is evil, selfish, and unkind — all want of self-sacrifice — all greediness and stinginess — all neglect of Christian service of others — all lowering of the standard of goodness — all that is unholy, impure and un-Christlike.

FAITH — O Jesus, the Faithful Witness, grant that I may be truly sorry for all my lack of faith — all disloyalty to friends — to employers — all breach of trust — all insincerity — all broken resolutions — all suspicious thoughts of others — all want of true reliance upon Thee and Thy promises.

MEEKNESS — Forgive me, O Lord Jesus, all bitter resentment — all pride and prejudice — all self-assertion — lack of humility — refusal to take the lowest place — conceit — exaggeration — love of flattery — showing off — self-justification.

TEMPERANCE — Make me, O Lord, truly sorry for all my lack of control, all excess — inordinate affection — misuse of powers of body, mind or soul — all unchastity of thought or word or deed — all self-indulgence — over-eating — laziness — lack of discipline — all refusal to control wandering thoughts — neglect to direct my will aright.

'IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' (I John 1:9) O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world; Have mercy upon us.

(The nine prayers were taken almost verbatim from *Ideals of Holiness,* by F. W. Drake.)

What is Your Duty Towards Your Rector?

My duty towards my rector is . . .

TO HELP HIM TO PRAY — Do you expect your rector to possess, in addition to a charming personality, the combined gifts of the orator, psychiatrist, administrator, diplomat, teacher, financier, author, architect, musician, social worker, handy-man and after-dinner speaker? Most of us if we are honest, must answer 'yes' to this absurd question, whereas there is just one thing we ought to expect of our rector and that is that he be a channel for the Holy Spirit. At the moment of the laying on of hands in Ordination, the bishop says, 'Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God, . . .' It is an office no man can fill, a work no man can do, unless he does receive the Holy Ghost, to dwell in him and work through him. It is one of the Christian paradoxes that the Christian minister can best serve God and his people by giving time and attention to his own personal life of prayer and loving communion with God, for only those who are in close touch with God can become clear channels through which His grace and power can reach others. But the 'demands on the time, interest, kindness, patience and energy of the faithful priest are constant, and must be met,' and it is often desperately difficult for him to find time and privacy for the disciplined life of prayer and study without which his ministry will be arid and fruitless. We can help to give him this time by being considerate, by not making trivial demands upon him. (Is this telephone call necessary?) We can encourage him to go off by himself. We can perhaps make a contribution to the fuel bill so that even in winter he can use the church for prayer and meditation. . . . Best of all, we can undertake —

TO PRAY FOR HIM — It is natural for us to think of his praying for us, but do we ever stop to think how much our rector needs our prayers? In addition to his own personal problems and troubles, he bears about with him many of our burdens; and, although the ministry can and should be a rich and deeply joyful life, it has its own peculiar pitfalls and dif-

ficulties, subtle temptations, dragging discouragements, heart-breaking disappointments. No other 'church work' is so important as prayer for the clergy. Here are some suggestions for doing it faithfully and systematically: Let us —

1. Pray for our rector each day when we pray for those nearest and dearest to us. (This will keep us from forgetting.)

2. In church, pray for any minister taking part in the service; pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance for the preacher, when he kneels down to pray himself and as he goes into the pulpit (this can be done while singing a hymn); for the celebrant, at the beginning of the communion service and as he makes his own communion.

3. On Saturdays hold up to God in prayer all the clergy we know, by name, always including our bishop, and then pray the Our Father, praying each clause for them . . . Prayer for our rector will help us to understand and —

TO RESPECT HIM — Casual modern manners, first-name calling, often make it difficult to feel and to show respect where it is due. However friendly our relations with him may be, we must never forget 'into how high a Dignity, and to how weighty an Office and Charge' our rector has been called. (Read his ordination service, Prayer Book, page 536.) We are to treat him, and encourage others to treat him, as befits a minister of God and we are to speak only good of him. He who is without fault among us, let him utter the first criticism . . . And whether or not we like or approve of him, we are —

TO RECEIVE HIS MINISTRY — 'The office of a Priest is, to minister to the people committed to his care; to preach the Word of God; to baptize; to celebrate the Holy Communion; and to pronounce Absolution and Blessing in God's Name.' (Prayer Book, page 294.) He can do none of these things without us; he does them all for just one purpose, to bring us into the loving fellowship with God which is life eternal.

Saintly Maidens, Godly Matrons

ST. AGATHA — February 5 — c. 250 — Martyred at Catania in Sicily. The patroness of wet-nurses, bell-founders and jewelers.

ST. AGNES — January 21 — c. 304 — A Roman maiden martyred at 12 or 13 years of age. She is a special patron of chastity and is shown in art holding a lamb.

ST. ANNE — July 26 — The mother of the blessed Virgin Mary.

ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA — November 25 — c. 310 — She is said to have argued with, and overcome, 50 pagan philosophers before she was put to death on a spiked wheel. Patroness of philosophers. Shown in art with the wheel or arguing with philosophers.

ST. CECELIA — November 22 — 2nd - 3rd cent. — One of the most famous of martyred Roman maidens, patroness of musicians. Shown in art playing the organ or the harp.

ST. CLARE OF ASSISI — August 12 — 1193-1253 — A beautiful maiden who, drawn to the ideal of Christian poverty preached by St. Francis, ran away from home at the age of 18 and founded the Franciscan women's order, the Poor Clares, which she governed with great wisdom for 40 years. Shown in art holding a monstrance.

ST. ELISABETH — November 5 — 1st century — The mother of St. John the Baptist. All that we know of her is in the first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel.

ST. HELENA — August 18 — c. 250-c. 330 — Born in Asia Minor, the mother of the Emperor Constantine. Her name is chiefly associated with the finding of the True Cross in a rock cistern near Mt. Calvary. Shown in art holding the Cross.

ST. HILDA — November 17 — 617-680 — A kinswoman of King St. Edwin. Abbess of two convents. Her influence was one of the decisive factors in securing unity in the English Church. One of the greatest Englishwomen of all time.

ST. MARGARET OF ANTIOCH — July 20 — c. 304 — One of the most popular maiden martyr saints. Known in the East as Marina. Shown in art with a dragon.

ST. MARTHA — July 29 — d.c. 80 — Sister of Lazarus and Mary, she was hostess to our Lord in their house in Bethany. 'Careful and troubled about many things.'

ST. MARY THE VIRGIN — February 2, March 25, and many other dates — d. ? c. 45 — The virgin mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ST. MARY MAGDALEN — July 22 — 1st century — Mentioned in all four Gospels as one of the most devoted followers of our Lord. In the Western Church she is identified with the Sinner (St. Luke 7:37) and Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus. This identification is challenged by the tradition and writings of the Eastern Church.

ST. MONICA — May 4 — 332-387 — Born at Carthage of Christian parents; married to a pagan. She is chiefly renowned because of her unceasing prayers for the conversion of her brilliant son Augustine, who became one of the Church's greatest saints.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA — October 15 — 1515-1582 — A great mystic saint and writer on the spiritual life; the indefatigable founder and reformer of many Carmelite convents. The saint of sound common sense, good humor and generous ideals. 'One of the greatest, most attractive and widely appreciated women the world has ever known.'

Food For Thought

A List of Books

PRAYER —

THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER by Olive Wyon (SCM Press, London — USA Distributors, Allenson)

GROWTH IN PRAYER by Constance Garrett (Macmillan)

TEACH US TO PRAY by Charles F. Whiston (Pilgrim)

THE LIFE OF PRAYER by Friedrich von Hugel (Dutton)

INSTRUCTIONS IN THE LIFE OF PRAYER — Pamphlet (Forward Movement Publications)

PRAYER GROUPS —

PRAYER AND PRAYER GROUPS by Constance Garrett (Holy Cross Press)

INTERCESSION by Christine Fleming Heffner (Holy Cross Press)

MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS by Evelyn Underhill (Longmans) — Excellent for reading aloud

COLLECTED PAPERS by Evelyn Underhill (Longmans) What is probably the wisest and best advice on the subject of Prayer Groups ever written is given in an essay called 'The Parish Priest and the Life of Prayer.' See page 146 ff.

THE HOLY COMMUNION —

THE MYSTERY OF SACRIFICE — A Meditation on the Liturgy by Evelyn Underhill (Longmans)

THE ALTAR FIRE — Reflections on the Sacrament of the Eucharist by Olive Wyon (SCM Press — USA Distributors, Allenson)

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE —

A TESTAMENT OF DEVOTION by Thomas Kelly (Harper)

OUR CHRISTIAN VOCATION by John Heuss (Seabury Press)

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOUR by C. S. Lewis (Macmillan)

THE SINGLE EYE — Austin Pardue (Morehouse-Gorham)

LIVING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, LIVING THE LORD'S PRAYER, LIVING THE CREED by Carroll E. Simcox (Morehouse-Gorham)

GREAT CHRISTIAN CLASSICS —

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST by Thomas a Kempis — Whitford-Klein Translation (Harper)

THE CONFESSIONS OF SAINT AUGUSTINE (Modern Library and many other editions)

INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVOUT LIFE by St. Francis de Sales (Many Editions)

A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE by William Law (Everyman)

COLLECTIONS OF PRAYERS —

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

A POCKET BOOK FOR CHRISTIANS — Put together by a Religious of CSMV (SCM Press — USA Distributors, Allenson) Pamphlet

A SAINT FRANCIS PRAYER BOOK by Malcolm Playfoot (Seabury Press) Pamphlet

A BOOK OF PRAYERS by John Heuss (Morehouse-Gorman)

LITANIES OF PRAYER AND PRAISE (Holy Cross Press) Pamphlet

PRAYERS NEW AND OLD and PRAYERS FOR ALL OCCASIONS (Forward Movement Publications) Pamphlets

(Many prayers are included in the various devotional manuals, *The Practice of Religion, Father Field's Prayer Book, St. Swithun's Prayer Book, The Centenary Prayer Book, A Treasury of Devotion,* etc.)

BIBLE STUDY —

THE HOLY BIBLE — Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha

THE RONALD KNOX BIBLE (Sheed and Ward) A beautiful modern translation

THE ONE VOLUME BIBLE COMMENTARY Edited by J. R. Dummelow (Macmillan)

READINGS IN ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL by William Temple (Macmillan)

WORSHIP —

THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH by Massey H. Shepard, Jr. (Seabury Press)

Note: Religious books may be ordered through any book store. They may be borrowed from THE LIBRARY OF ST. BEDE — 157 East 72nd Street, New York 21, and from THE MARGARET PEABODY LENDING LIBRARY — Convent of the Holy Nativity, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Both Libraries will be glad to send information about borrowing books by mail on request.

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